

ATTUNING THE SENSES



DAWN FELDHAUS/POST-RECORD

Mark Burbey, of Minneapolis, is repairing a damaged soundboard on a 1910 A.B. Chase grand piano at the School of Piano Technology for the Blind, in Vancouver. The school provides piano sales, tunings and repairs.

"It is a personal growth experience. It caters to my disability and is quite enlightening — understanding problems are not unique to me — they're common to blindness."

— Alan Holst

In tune for tomorrow

□ Blind students pursue careers in piano tuning and repairs

By Dawn Feldhaus
Post-Record staff

Visitors to the School of Piano Technology for the Blind could almost immediately notice a whimsical display near the school's entrance.

The front lobby includes numerous items that piano repair and tuning students have found in pianos, over the years. Those items have included a ruler, an empty Bacardi rum bottle, a baseball, a plastic Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle figure and a "2" birthday candle.

The school, founded by Emil Fries, in 1949, is located in Vancouver. According to

Administrative Assistant Julia Liudahl, it is the only school in the world solely dedicated to training the blind for piano tuning and repair.

Liudahl, of Washougal, said the school's graduates have included residents of 36 states and 14 countries. Last year, they included a student from Haiti.

"It's not just a rewarding job," Liudahl said. "It's a passion. I love my job very much. It's probably the most positive place that I've been to."

As the assistant to Executive Director Len Leger, her secretarial duties include accounting, piano sales, fundraising event coordinator, financial aid assistant, librarian and student records. After graduating from Washougal High School in 2002, Liudahl

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